

"Rainbow/PUSH Coalition Saturday Morning Meeting" Chicago, IL - A VOTE LESS PEOPLE IS A HOPE LESS PEOPLE.

For most Americans, a vote is much more than just a way of deciding who will hold public office. It's a way of wielding power. What is "power?" Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., said in one of his books, "power is the ability to achieve purpose." Power itself, he said, is neutral. It can be used to achieve a good or a bad purpose.

I possess *hope* and I've experienced *spiritual power* but there are only two sources of *material power* in the world - *economics* and *politics*

. By definition poor people, working people and middle class people, relatively speaking, have limited organized economic power. Our counterbalance to overwhelming and concentrated economic power is politics.

*Political* power is mostly how we - in our representative democracy - elect or appoint *lawmakers* or *judges* to write, execute and interpret legislation that is for the greater good and for the greatest number of people.

What exactly is politics? Politics is the distribution system for the economic system. The political system distributes what the economic system produces in terms of goods and services. Politics determines who, gets what, when, where, how, how much, for how long, and what it's called - a tax break, a tax credit, a tax write-off, a grant, a loan or welfare.

Poor, working and middle class people must focus on gaining political power. Rev. Jackson often says we need the three Ps - *power, program and progress* - and we need them in that order! But how do we go about getting political power? WE MUST ORGANIZE IT!

Even though power, program and progress are what we need - in that order - I want to reverse that order this morning as I talk about why "A VOTE LESS PEOPLE IS A HOPE LESS PEOPLE."

## I. PROGRESS

We should not separate into neat little categories *hope* and *material progress*. We shouldn't totally separate m  
*oral*  
and  
*material*  
things. There's always a connection and interplay between hope and happiness, between moral and material things. We need to study the *nature of their relationship*  
, not separate them.

I'm *for* material progress. I'm *for* social progress. I'm *for* political progress. I'm a political progressive because I believe in material progress -  
*progress for*  
*all*  
, *and progress from the*  
*bottom up*  
.

Progress is not what Chicago is experiencing in 2005 under its current mayor. For the last six months we've read and seen nothing but corruption, greed and malfeasance throughout much of city government - a mismanaged affirmative action program, a hired truck scandal, an asphalt kick-back scheme, a major Columbian drug connection with dealers selling drugs while on the public payroll. While the corruption has not directly touched the Mayor, it's *all around* him. As a result, we've seen a defensive and angry Mayor Richard M. Daley, but we haven't seen a responsible and accountable Mayor Daley. Instead of a Mayor who says, "the buck stops here," we've seen a Mayor who passes the buck.

Instead of fighting for progressive economic programs for *all* Chicagoans, we see a Mayor

fighting to protect programs of privatization that only benefit the  
*few*

.

How do we change this? We've got to register and vote in record numbers! In a democracy, a vote less people is a hope less people.

## II. PROGRAM

In Chicago there is limited and temporary progress for a relative few, but the vast majority of average Chicagoans are not making progress on many necessary fronts. Waste, fraud and abuse are commonplace, but corruption is merely the tip of the iceberg.

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**Trade Unions**: Mayor Daley has stiffed trade unions and workers in Chicago. He wouldn't negotiate in good faith with them. This Mayor Daley is committed to privatization - which is against the interests of most workers. Privatization is at the root of some of the corruption - e.g., the hired truck program. And when privatization *comes*, in most instances, union jobs *go*. While Governor Blagojevich has signed an executive order allowing the most basic workers to organize into unions - e.g., 50,000 previously unorganized home child care providers (homecare workers) are poised to join SEIU - Mayor Daley is undercutting organized labor at almost every level and in almost every union. Mayor Richard

**J**

. Daley would have never dealt with trade unionists like Richard M. Daley is dealing with them. We need a city that works for working people. I invite Labor to join the coalition to register voters to bring about change.

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**City Workers**: City workers - firemen, policemen, AFSCME - were forced to work without a contract for an extended period of time. Mayor Daley finally negotiated a contract with some, but even they are still angry at the way the Mayor treated them - ignoring and taking them for granted for two years. Additionally, city workers can see the handwriting on the wall - the handwriting of outsourcing their public jobs to private contractors. Mayor Richard

**J**

. Daley would never have dealt with city workers in such a manner.

Of course, that was when the Democratic Political Machine was built *almost exclusively* on organized labor and city workers' political work and financial contributions. But Mayor Richard M. Daley is running a different kind of Democratic Political Machine - a kind of pinstripe patronage system. He increasingly gets his political contributions and workers from the private companies and contractors that do business with the city because, in a modern political campaign, he needs fewer workers on the street. However, Mayor Daley is still using city workers in political campaigns in violation of the Shakman decree. Modern campaigns rely more on corporate contributions for TV and radio commercials, polling and direct mail pieces than on the traditional campaign workers that organized labor and city workers can put on the street and in the precincts. A voter registration coalition needs to monitor whether public institutions are aggressively implementing Motor Voter registration.

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**Education:** Mayor Daley's commitment to privatization extends to our children's education. His so-called *Renaissance 2010 Plan* means he has a reduced dedication to *public* education and is committed to a path of

*privatizing*

our public schools. Privatization involves educational "creaming" - that is, educating the *best*

and leaving the *rest*

. Through his 2010 plan he has proposed closing about 60-to-80 public schools over five years - so far, all of them in the Black community - and turning at least two-thirds of the 100 replacement schools over to the privatizers of public education. It's an affront to public education, public education

*teachers*

and the Chicago Teachers Union. They're upset and they should be. This is an ideologically driven Republican scheme being politically supported by a Democratic Mayor! This is not the orientation of a progressive Democratic Mayor. Mayor Richard

**J**

. Daley would have never dealt with public education like Mayor Richard M. Daley is dealing with it. We need a city that works for our children. I invite teachers and professors to coalesce and join a voter registration drive in the high schools and colleges to help

*every*

eligible voter to register and provide them with basic non-partisan civic education.

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**Affordable Housing:** There is an affordable housing crisis in the nation, including Chicago. Chicago community organizations concerned with building affordable housing *for all*

want the Mayor to support, in law, the idea that any developer who builds ten or more housing units must make 15% - down from a previous high of 20% - available and affordable to the

average working class Chicagoan.

*Mayor Daley is opposed to the idea!*

Could it be because these housing developers are part of his stream of political contributions from on high? It's another instance of the Mayor operating, politically, top down rather than bottom up. It's not the way his father operated. When there was clear and pronounced political activity bubbling up from the bottom he didn't ignore it, he

*co-opted*

it. He would first publicly reject any outside ideas, then introduce and pass them as his own.

From the stories I've heard, I can't imagine Mayor Richard

**J**

. Daley treating community organizations committed to affordable housing for all in such a manner. We need a city that provides affordable housing for its people. I invite a coalition of community organizations to join in a massive voter registration effort.

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**Public Health:** Alderman Ed Smith has introduced comprehensive anti-smoking legislation *to protect the public health*

of the average Chicagoan. Mayor Daley - again beholden to Mike Ditka and his other bar and restaurant campaign contributors - is opposed to protecting the public's health. Already 2,000 - of 6,700 - of Chicago's restaurants are smoke free voluntarily. Chicago is the

*only*

big city in America without such an ordinance. New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco and 2,000 other U.S. cities and municipalities, plus Norway, Sweden, New Zealand and many other countries have such a ban -

*and it hasn't hurt business*

. Chicago needs a Mayor who will help us catch up to the rest of the world! We need a healthy city. I invite the anti-smoking coalition to join the voter registration coalition!

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**Daley vs. Daley:** There's a phrase that goes, "a rose is a rose is a rose." But I've concluded that a Daley is *not* a Daley is *not* a Daley. Mayor Richard **J**. Daley was much different than is Mayor Richard

**M**

. Daley. Both created and directed political machines, but Mayor Richard J. Daley was more responsive to the grassroots and to political activity from below than Mayor Richard M. Daley. Mayor Richard J. Daley was a more economically progressive big city Democratic Mayor than Richard M. Daley. I

*am not*

suggesting that the old machine was good and the new machine is bad. I

*am*

suggesting that we need a new kind of - small "d" - democratic politics in Chicago, the kind that represents and fights for the average Chicagoan. We need to transform a "city that works" into a city that "

*works for you*

."

Mayor Richard M. Daley is becoming a new breed of Democratic Mayor - more conservative than progressive; more DLC - Democrats for the Leisure Class - than DWMC, a Democrat for the Working Middle and Class.

lass; more oriented toward big business and privatization and less sympathetic to public workers and public service; more a Mayor who operates from the corporation, contractors and vendors from the

*top down,*

rather than meeting human needs, providing public services and helping workers from the *bottom up*

. New York has a Republican Mayor. Los Angeles has had Democratic Mayors but, unlike Chicago, it's not necessarily identified as a

*Democratic stronghold*

. While not always progressive socially, Chicago and Democratic progressive economics have traditionally been synonymous! Under Mayor Richard M. Daley that is changing. A bean in Millennium Park has become more important than beans on the table in Morgan Park. I invite the coalition of progressive forces concerned about the

*direction*

of

*this*

Mayor Daley - African Americans, labor, educators, Latinos, the Asian community, Caucasians and others - to join forces in a voter registration coalition.

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**Abraham Lincoln National Airport**: We need a Mayor with an economic vision big enough to include all Chicagoans and big enough to create balanced economic growth in Chicago and the metropolitan area. Instead, this Mayor is quietly using his political connections and clout in Chicago and Illinois to surreptitiously undercut building the Abraham Lincoln National Airport (the ALNA).

State Representative David Miller had already done most of the legal work that was required to determine whether the Abraham Lincoln National Airport Commission (the ALNAC) had violated any state laws with respect to procurement and whether the Governor, acting on his own, could transfer the land to the ALNAC without any action (or interference) by the Illinois General Assembly. Together we sought and received five separate legal opinions - from the Illinois Legislative Research Unit (the research arm of the General Assembly), the Congressional

Research Service (the research arm of Congress), and three private law firms. Independently, all five legal opinions concluded that everything was in order with respect to the applicable laws - that is, no laws were violated with respect to procurement, and action by the General Assembly was unnecessary.

The Attorney General Lisa Madigan told Rep. Miller that studying the issues were a "top priority" in her office and would take only "about two weeks." However, after almost two *months* David Miller heard from the AG that it would take another six weeks and maybe up to six months to complete the review. Rep. Miller doesn't understand what the holdup is. Most of the legal work was done

*for*

the Attorney General. This is not a major or overly complicated legal issue. Rep. Miller wants a *legal*

opinion from the AG not a

*political*

one!

Chicago has two major problems related to air travel: (1) we have a *capacity crisis* at O'Hare and Midway; and (2) we have an *imbalance of economic growth*

in the region. Spending \$15 to \$20 billion to tear down and rebuild O'Hare will solve neither. Building the Lincoln National Airport will contribute mightily to solving both. I'm not against modernizing O'Hare - and building the Lincoln Airport will not interfere with that - but building a third airport to address the air capacity crisis is faster, cheaper, safer, cleaner and less disruptive than tearing down and rebuilding O'Hare.

The Lincoln Airport will not compete with O'Hare or Midway for customers or federal dollars. It is being built specifically for discount carriers - Jet Blue, ATA, etc., carriers who can't get into O'Hare. And it won't compete for federal dollars. It's a public-private partnership that has no cost or risk to taxpayers. The private developers are willing to invest \$200 million in Illinois - almost jeopardized by the Mayor's and his political actors attempts to delay and disrupt a rather smooth flowing process - costing Illinois workers 15,000 by 2009. And - oh yes - everyone is going to get their fair share of jobs, contracts and vendors because the ALNAC is committed to the strongest equal opportunity policies in the country. I invite the ALNAC coalition to join the voter registration coalition.

### III. POWER

Mayor Daley won re-election in 2003 with a mere **363,000** votes. There are **650,000 unregistered voters**

in Chicago - almost twice as many

**unregistered voters**

as votes he got in 2003. If you

*want progress*

; and if you

*need progressive economic programs*

; then you've got to get involved in

*organizing the power*

- and the power is in massive voter registration.

The queen of voter registration in Chicago, Alice Tregay, has agreed to serve as the coalition's voter registration contact and consultant. Yuri Brown and T.J. Crawford have agreed to help give it organization and direction.

If you're interested in participating in the Chicago Voter Registration and Verification Drive fill out the sign-up sheet we passed out this morning or call us at 773.731.0000 and give us your information.

## **CONCLUSION**

We need social, economic and political progress in Chicago. We must restore the peoples' hope in order to bring about progressive change. And hope must engage and motivate a coalition to undertake the most massive voter registration drive and campaign ever experienced in Chicago - *combined with civic education and education on the issues that affect our daily lives*. **THE COALITION MUST BE COMMITTED TO DOING THAT!**

YOU have the power. The POWER is in your hands. The POWER is in voter registration. Join the coalition today and in the coming weeks and months to help register this large number of unregistered voters in Chicago.